

FORM 1

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness characteristics inventory information on all or part of the area?

a. Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory

b. Inventory Area Unique Identifier (s): CDCA 343

c. Map Name (s)/Number(s): California Desert Wilderness Inventory – South Half 1979

d. BLM District (s)/Field Office (s): CDD/PSSCFO

## 2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record:

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory

[illegible]

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier CDCA 1343-1 Acreage 49,161

(If the inventory area consists of subunits, list the acreage of each and evaluate separately).

In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

**(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below),**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

Note: If "No" is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "N/A" for the remaining questions below.

Description (describe the boundaries of the area—wilderness inventory roads, property lines, etc.):

Roughly 17,200 acres of this unit are now part of the Mecca Hills Wilderness. The unit's boundary remains the same along the east and southeast with, a paved, Box Canyon Road; Interstate 10 to the north; and, on the south-southwest, by the Coachella canal and a portion of a Riverside County maintained road. The remaining 31,961 acres are mainly checker-boarded with Private and Tribal Lands and contains several Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) Designated Routes and has roads, powerlines, and some primitive, yet visible, ways that cross much of this area. Although the remaining acreage of the unit itself is over 31,000 acres, there are not 5,000 contiguous acres within the unit, therefore not meeting the size criteria of wilderness characteristics.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A X

Note: If "No" is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "N/A" for the remaining questions below.

Description (include land ownership, location, topography, vegetation, and summary of major human uses/activities):

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remaining is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A X

Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for solitude):

**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remaining is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A X

Note: If "No" is checked for both 3 and 4, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "N/A" for question 5.

Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation):

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value)?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

N/A   X  

Description:

(Add description here)

### Summary of Analysis\*

Area Unique Identifier: CDCA 1343-1

#### Summary

The remaining 31,961 acres are mainly checker-boarded with Private and Tribal Lands and contains several Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) Designated Routes and has roads, powerlines, and some primitive, yet visible, ways that cross much of this area. Although the remaining acreage of the unit itself is over 31,000 acres, there are not 5,000 contiguous acres within the unit, therefore not meeting the size criteria of wilderness characteristics.

#### Results of analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☐ Yes ☒ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☒ No
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☒ No

#### Check one:

☐ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

☒ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

#### Prepared by (team members):

John Johnson, ECFO - Environmental Protection Specialist, 6/10/2014

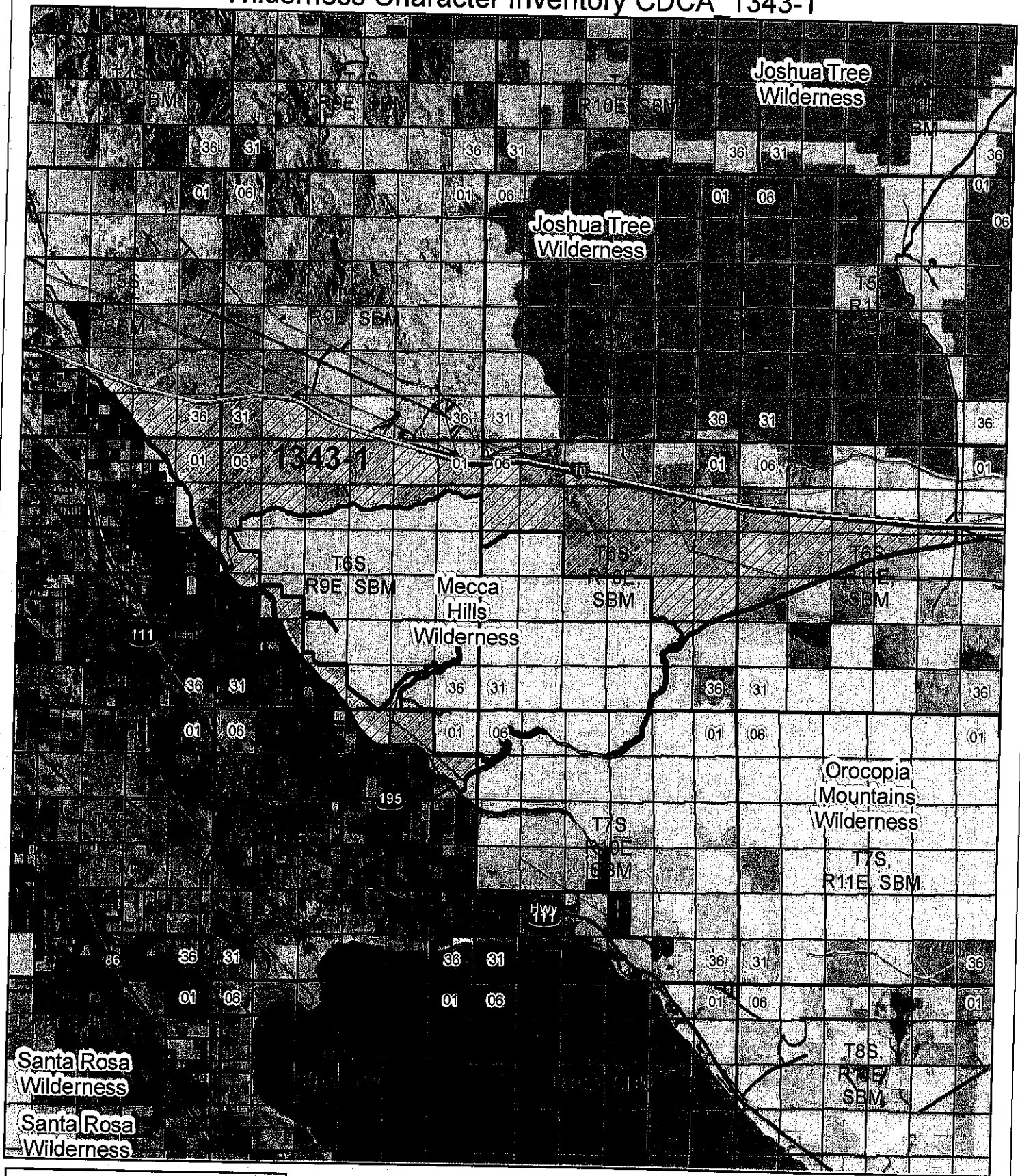
#### Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

Name: John R. Keady Title: Field Manager

Date: 2/9/16

\*This form documents information that constitutes and inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR or 1610.5-3

# Wilderness Character Inventory CDCA\_1343-1



**Legend**

**Wilderness Inventory Units**

**Federal Wilderness Surface Management**

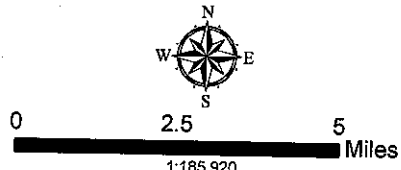
**Managing Agency**

- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- National Park Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

**Government Lands**

**AGENCY**

- Bureau of Land Management
- Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Department of Defense
- Other Federal
- State
- Local Government



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 Date Prepared: 1/21/2016  
 Project: CDCA\_1343-1



## AREA 343

### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This area is bounded on the north by Interstate 10, on the east and southeast by the paved Box Canyon Road; and, on the south-southwest, by the Coachella Canal and a portion of a Riverside County maintained road.

### II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The boundaries include approximately 24 sections of non-public land scattered throughout, mostly in a checkerboard pattern and accounting for 35 percent of the total land area.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The majority of this roadless area contains the extremely colorful, deeply eroded, and sparsely-vegetated Mecca Hills. Small, narrow, steep-walled canyons wind throughout this area creating a natural maze within this badlands labyrinth. Sandy washes dissect the area and contain stands of ironwood, smoke trees, and palo verde, while scattered stands of ocotillo grow on the hilly slopes. Some portions of the Mecca Hills, known also as the Mud Hills, show evidence of the presence of the San Andreas Fault which has uplifted adding to the erosion and breaking off huge rock slabs. The northern and western portions of this roadless area are more gently sloping and include large desert washes such as Thermal Canyon. This portion is either in private land ownership or checkerboard ownership which creates areas of noncontiguous public lands.

### IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Within the solidly blocked portion of the Mecca Hills man's work is substantially unnoticeable and is an area where the earth and its community of life are undisturbed by man. Presently, the area is used by off-road vehicles, but much of the use occurs in the washes where visible alteration of the primeval character and influence of the land is not readily apparent. Some primitive ways do exist on the hills and erosion has occurred on the steep slopes. Although visible, the intimacy and extent of the canyon systems within the Meccas greatly reduces the imprint of man's work. The only portion within the Mecca Hills which has been excluded as not containing wilderness values is the Riverside County maintained road and campground in Painted Canyon. There is an Airway Beacon site and service road located in this area south of Cactus City.

The potential Wilderness Study Area boundary is common with the roadless area boundary on the east, west and south sides. The northwestern boundary follows a wash which cuts diagonally across the public/private boundary to near the beacon tower, then generally follows the contour at about the 1600 foot level back to Box Springs Road.

### V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

Unlimited outstanding opportunities for solitude exist in the Mecca Hills due to the intricate passageways and complex canyon system which wind into the interior and tend to create a psychologically large area which effectively screens users from one another. Combined with this intimate type of solitude, outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation experience is easily obtained. Diverse landforms and colorful and highly eroded rugged terrain all add to primitive and unconfined movement.

### VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments against inclusion cited the history of off-road vehicle use. Field examination confirmed that evidence of this use was, for the most part, confined to sandy canyon bottoms and would pass with time; therefore, the impact was not long-term and would not impair the suitability of the area for consideration as wilderness. Other public comments addressed study phase considerations.

## AREA 344

### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This roadless area parallels the paved Box Canyon Road to the west and northwest; Interstate 10 to the north; the Salt Creek Road and Kaiser Industrial Railroad to the